

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 02579 281531Z

64

ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0969

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2579

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: FEBRUARY 27, 1975 REFERENDUM: MARCOS GETS HIS MANDATE

REF: MANILA 2294

BEGIN SUMMARY: ESTIMATED 24 MILLION VOTERS (MORE THAN 90 PERCENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE WENT TO POLLS FEB 27. POLLING EXTENDED UNTIL NOON FEBRUARY 28 IN METRO MANILA AND CERTAIN OTHER AREAS. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY FIRST RESUTLS AND PROJECTIONS INDICATED OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT ON MARTIAL LAW QUESTION AND TO LESSER DEGREE ON APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL OFFICIALS. PRESUMABLY THIS IS DESIGNED ENHANCE REFERENDUM'S CREDIBILITY AS IS FACT PRESS HAS BEEN PERMITTED TO CARRY ACCOUNTS OF LIMITED BOYCOTT EFFORTS WEARY TV COMMENTATOR SUMMED UP REFERENDUM BEST WHEN HE TOLD AUDIENCE THERE "REALLY WASN'T MUCH TO SAY" SINCE REFENENDUM YES VOTE TREND WAS CLEAR FROM OUTSET. EMBASSY WILL PROVIDE FINAL RESULTS AND ASSESSMENT OF REFERENDUM IN A SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE. END SUMMARY

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PAGE 02 MANILA 02579 281531Z

1. COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT 24 MILLION VOTERS OR 90 PERCENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE VOTED IN THE FEBRUARY 27 REFERENDUM POLLING WAS EXTENDED TO NOON FEBRUARY 28 IN METRO-MANILA AND THOSE AREAS WHERE 20 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS FAILED TO VOTE BY 6PM FEBRUARY 27, THE END OF OFFICIAL BALLOT-ING.

2. AS OF NOON FEBRUARY 28 COMELEC WAS PROJECTING FOLLOWING PERCENTAGES ON REFERENDUM QUESTIONS: 91.7 PERCENT APPROVE PRESIDENT'S EXERCISE OF MARTIAL LAW POWERS AND 91 PERCENT WANT HIM TO CONTINUE. 81.3 PERCENT WANT PRESIDENT APPOINT LOCAL OFFICIALS WHILE 18.7 PERCENT PREFER ELECTIONS. (CEBU CITY OPTED FOR ELECTIONS). THERE POSSIBILITY THESE PERCENTAGES WILL SHIFT UPWARD AS MORE RESULTS RECEIVED. SOME COMMENTATORS HAVE SUGGESTED PRESIDENT'S MARTIAL LAW APPROVAL PERCENTAGE MIGHT CLIMB TO 95 PERCENT. THIS COMPARES TO 91 PERCENT IN JULY 1973 REFERENDUM.

3. PNA REPORTS AVAILABLE TO US SUGGEST BOYCOTT ACTION NOT WIDESPREAD ALTHOUGH THERE WAS SURPRISING NUMBER OF BLANK VOTES IN MANILA AREA. PRESS REPORTS NUMBER OF CLERICS LOCKED THEMSELVES IN CHURCHES IN BUKIDONON (BOYCOTT ADVOCATE BISHOP CLAVER'S DIOCESE.) GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATING THEIR NON-PARTICIPATION. SIMILAR INCIDENT REPORTEDLY TOOK PLACE IN CAGAYAN DE ORO. CEBU'S CARDINAL ROSALES CONDEMNED ACTIVITIES OF MOSTLY RELIGIOUS REFERENDUM OPPONENTS, 1500 OF WHOM REPORTEDLY DEMONSTRATED AT CEBU CATHEDRAL. MANILA'S TONDON RESIDENTS DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BOYCOTTED REFERENDUM ALTHOUGH MANY SAID TO HAVE TURNED IN BLANK BALLOTS.

4. THERE WERE INTERESTING SIDELIGHTS TO REFERENDUM. MUSLIM REBELS WERE INVITED COME DOWN FROM HILLS TO VOTE AS LONG AS THEY CAME ONE BY ONE. MUSLIMS IN COTABATO AREA, HOWEVER, CHOSE TO CELEBRATE REFERENDUM BY MORTARING CENTRAL MINDANAO COMMAND HDQTRS. THIS REPORTEDLY DID NOT DISCOURAGE BIG COTABATO TURNOUT. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR DETAINEES TO VOTE. SOME 615 VOTED AT CAMP CRAME WHERE CAMP COMMANDER TOLD PRESS "THERE WAS NO BOYCOTT OR ANY SUCH THING." IN MAKATI, SAMPLE BALLOT INVITED VOTERS TO SAY SOME "NICE THINGS ABOUT MAYOR" ON REMARKS SHEET PORTION OF BALLOT. SAMPLE COMMENTS SUCH AS "MAYOR IS DOING FINE JOB" WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MANILA 02579 281531Z

PROVIDED IN ENGLISH AND TAGALOG.

5. MEDIA HAS TREATED REFERENDUM AS IF IT WERE GENUINE ELECTION WITH ELEMENT OF SUSPENSE. REFERENDUM WATCH SHOS WERE TRANSMITTED UNTIL 2 AM FRIDAY MORNING AND CONTINUED THIS MORNING. NEWSPAPERS DEVOTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO REFERENDUM RESULTS. A LARGE BOARD IN LUNETA PARK IS KEEPING ELZVTORATE (WHICH IS ENJOYING THREE DAY HOLIDAY DECLARED

BECAUSE OF REFERENDUM) INFORMED OF RESULTS.

6. COMMENT. AS ONE OVER-TIRED LOOKING AND HOARSE TV
COMMENTATOR SAID SOMEWHAT APOLOGETICALLY TO HIS REFERENDUM
WATCH AUDIENCE THIS MORNING "THERE IS REALLY NOT MUCH TO SAY
ON THE REFERENDUM SINCE YES VOTE TREND WAS CLEAR FROM BEGINN-
ING." THAT SUMS IT UP RATHER WELL. WE SHALL BE DETAILING
FINAL RESULTS AND PROVIDING OUR THOUGHTS ON WHAT LATEST
EXERCISE IN BARANGAY DEMOCRACY WAS ALL ABOUT IN SUBSEQUENY
MESSAGE.
SULLIVAN

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